

PROTECTING SAN FRANCISCO BAY

The San Francisco Bay and Delta constitute the largest estuary on the West Coast of the United States. Comprising more than 1,650 square miles, the bay and delta provide 20 million people with drinking water, irrigate approximately 4.5 million acres of farmland and drain nearly 40 percent of California's land area. Over the last 100 years, the estuary has undergone extensive modifications to hydrology, landscape and water quality. Major initiatives involving citizens of the region are currently underway to protect and restore this unique resource.

The Bay/Delta Accord is one such effort. Led by EPA, the State of California, and the U.S. Department of Interior, the Bay/Delta Accord which was reached in 1994 relies on scientific analysis and negotiation to build consensus between environmental organizations, business groups and water supply agencies. Together, these groups have defined common goals and are looking for mutually acceptable solutions that address the area's water supply concerns while promoting environmental protection.

The North Bay Initiative is another effort that focuses on preserving the habitat in and around San Francisco Bay. A coalition including EPA and 12 other federal, state and local government agencies is using outreach and education to promote common sense land-use. Combined with agricultural incentive programs, EPA believes that the delta protection strategy will reduce water pollution, preserve valuable habitat and protect the area's threatened and endangered species.

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